

Submitter: Laura Toussaint
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB3214

3/12/2023

Hello,

I am a concerned citizen, constituent, and member of PDX Animal Rights Collective. I am asking you, as a public servant, to please exercise your power and do the right thing to protect animal and human welfare by supporting HB 3214, which would ban the use of animals in the entertainment industry. The business model of traveling animal acts requires near constant travel, often 15,000-25,000 miles per year in extreme confinement for months on end, either in small cages or shackled. Neglected and deprived of basic necessities such as natural light and substrate, veterinary care, ventilation, and adequate space to move, eat, defecate/urinate, and exercise, they also must endure extreme temperatures. Years of documented undercover investigations and animal welfare violations prove that inhumane treatment is inherent in the industry. The Animal Welfare Act is rarely enforced in the entertainment industry.

Brutal control methods and physical coercion are used to force animals to perform unnatural, confusing tricks that may in themselves cause injury. Behind-the-scenes training involves aggressive, violent methods, including beating, whipping, kicking, clubbing, screaming, choking, and electric shock. Intimidation and emotional, social, or food deprivation are also commonly used. The more dangerous or stubborn the animal is considered, the more aggressively they're treated.

HB 3214 would only prohibit the use of a limited list of wild and exotic animals. It does not apply to farm animals, domesticated animals, amphibians, birds of prey, many small mammals, and most reptiles, including snakes and turtles. It will not impact traveling reptile shows since only 3 reptile groups are included: the relatively large Komodo dragon, crocodile/alligator, and tortoise, which are often confined in coffin-like containers for travel.

Permanent exhibitions, wildlife rehabilitators, veterinary clinics, sanctuaries, and licensed or accredited academic, medical, or research institutions, including programs like 4-H, are exempt. The exemptions within the bill address all of the concerns opponents may have. It will not affect rodeos.

Human safety and health issues are well documented. "Trained" wild animals have injured and even killed handlers and the public, and damaged property. Wildlife diseases, such as tuberculosis (TB) and SARS, are transmissible to humans. Seven zookeepers at the Oregon zoo contracted TB from elephants. According to the

USDA, 12-14% of Asian elephants in the U.S. have TB. SARS has been transmitted from civets to humans. Elephant rides and photo/petting ops with dangerous animals create risk for both health and safety.

Enforcement is expensive and problematic because local animal control officers typically know little about each species and may be unable to recognize a sick animal; they often have little time to inspect, gather evidence, and ensure compliance. Federal (USDA) inspections are equally problematic since keeping track of animals in mobile, temporary facilities exacerbates the difficulties of maintaining welfare standards and enforcing regulations.

Recent national polls show that more than 2/3 of Americans oppose the use of wild or exotic animals as entertainment. Within the U.S., more than 100 jurisdictions have bans in place, including several states. In Oregon, Benton, Multnomah, and Washington Counties have passed similar ordinances. Modern, human-powered circuses are increasingly popular, lucrative, and the preferred alternative to outdated animal performances.

Traveling animal acts claim they are “educational” because they attempt to teach the public about the animal's natural world, but they fail to disclose the truth about the suffering the animals endure and indirectly send the message that animals are objects to be used and that it's okay to ignore their needs and suffering.